

Corporate espionage

Secret Armies: The Growth of Corporate and Industrial Espionage, by Jacques Bergier.
Translated by Harold J. Salemon. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 268 pp. \$12.95.

By Arnold Reichman

This is a nonbook written in non-English and obviously published to cash in on public interest in espionage. Yet it is fascinating, the way good science-fiction is, even though a lot of the material in it is dated, and often is without indication as to source.

Let me first take up the non-English. A reader who is asked to spend \$12.95 has a right to expect a book to be written in his native language minus phrases like "sympathetic inks," "balled plasmas," "punishable by pains (sic) up to death" or a reference to "sky trains," whatever they are.

One should also expect facts to be correct. The Moscow-Washington hot line came after, not before, the Cuban missile crisis. FBI agents are not called "untouchables" in the United States. The bugged American eagle was in the U.S. Embassy at Moscow, not New Delhi.

There are also sentences which make no sense although they sound scientific -- "the product of the energy of a particle multiplied by local time (sic) is constant under certain conditions. If the local time can be modified, energy may be released." This sentence relates to a Soviet astronomer who has been

seeking a machine to harness the passage of time and to turn time into energy.

The author's credentials are impressive. He is described as a French scientist and World War II spy who claims to have established the world's first scientific-intelligence network. He has written more than 20 books on scientific and military subjects, three of which comprise the book under review.

Among the secrets M. Bergier has reportedly unveiled are that it is theoretically possible to turn the world rivers and oceans into jelly; scientists are experimenting with rays and other substances that could reduce populations to idiocy; huge mirrors in outer space could eliminate night, while lasers could make an impenetrable darkness.

M. Bergier tells us that hidden governments -- "cryptocracies" -- are being set up to replace both democratic governments and Communist dictatorships and "I would rather see one hidden government in the world than a number of rival ones," he writes. On the other hand he wants the United Nations to set up a secret service, a super-police force to spy on member nations and thereby make sure they aren't producing weapons which could destroy neighbors or the world itself.

This is a non-book because what M. Bergier has done is to splice a lot of newspaper and magazine clippings together like a long newsreel with closeups, distance shots and a chatty commentary. It is mostly fun reading, despite the clotted prose.

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